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ABSTRACT

The validity of the Self-Disclosure Inventory and of the theoretical framework in which Jourard sets self-disclosure was investigated. Sixty-seven male and fifty-one female college students from various fraternity and sorority organizations were used as subjects. The Self-Disclosure Inventory for the extent of disclosure to the subject's best friend of the same sex on campus was completed. The friend in each case completed a comparable form, indicating how much had been disclosed to him. Peer ratings of the seven variables theorized to be related to self-disclosing behavior were collected within each group of subjects. Self-Disclosure reports from each subject and his friend were compared. Results indicate some evidence of validity of the Self-Disclosure Inventory for males but not for females. There was no support for the proposition of a relationship between self-disclosure and positive peer perceptions. Some possible explanations for the attained results are suggested. (LR)

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## A Validation Study of Self-Disclosure

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The purpose of this study was to investigate the validity of the Self-Disclosure Inventory and of the theoretical framework in which Jourard sets self-disclosure. Jourard (1964) and others have proposed that self-disclosure or openness is healthy and even necessary for one's psychological growth. While there is considerable face validity to this position, behavioral evidence to support it is minimal. It has been shown that Jourard's (1964) inventory and other versions of the scale (e.g., Swensen's (1963) modification) have high test-retest reliability. There is a large body of demographic data on self-disclosure, showing significant interactions among status of the individual, target person, content area, and situation in determining the amount of disclosure (Jourard, 1964; Swensen, 1968). Various investigators have shown that persons who report high self-disclosure on one of the inventories also describe themselves on other self-report scales as less neurotic, more extraverted, having higher self-concept, and coming from families in which there were more close relationships, than do low self-disclosers (Swensen, 1968). The construct validity thus offered for the prototype "healthy self-discloser" is all intra-subject evidence; there is little "external data" to indicate the real meaning of the scale. Agreement on the amount of self-disclosure has been shown for married couples (Shapiro, 1965) and for artificial dyads in the laboratory (Pederson & Breglio, 1968), but not for the natural peer dyads on which most of the research has been

conducted. In fact, there has been evidence of no relationship between the scale score and observed behavior (Himelstein & Kimbrough, 1963; Himelstein & Lubin, 1965; Lubin & Harrison, 1964).

In this study, Swensen's (1963) modification of Jourard's scale was used. To seek consensual validation for self-disclosure, reports from both discloser and target were compared on how much had been disclosed from the S to the target. Peer ratings were used to provide possible external evidence of a favorable social image of the high self-discloser.

#### Method

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The Ss were 67 male and 51/coed college students; they consisted of five natural groups: three fraternity groups of 20, 22, and 25 members, and two sorority groups of 25 and 26 members. Each S completed the Self-Disclosure Inventory (Swensen, 1963) for the extent of disclosure to his best friend of the same sex on campus. The friend in each case completed a comparable form, indicating how much had been disclosed to. An attempt was made to consider both content and extent of disclosure (as rated on a three-point scale), but, because of the failure of many Ss to include content and the lack of specificity in the questions, the content aspect could not be included in the results; hence, the only index was the rated extent of disclosure.

Peer ratings were collected within each group on seven variables which Jourard's theorizing suggests should be related to self-disclosing behavior. Positive relationships were expected for the variables of liking, number of friends, self-esteem, self-disclosure, and extent of being disclosed to; an inverse relationship was predicted for need approval; and no prediction was made for leadership. Within each group, each S rated all other members

on the seven variables employing a seven-point scale and further indicated the three individuals for whom the trait was most and least true. Pilot work with these seven rating scales on two separate sorority groups indicated test-retest reliabilities ranging from .87 to .98.

### Results

The self-disclosure reports from the S and from the friend were compared by means of ANOV and correlational statistics. When the self-report scores were trichotomized into groups of high, medium, and low self-disclosers, there was a significant difference in the friend report scores for the male Ss only ( $p < .01$ ); this difference was in the expected direction, reflecting agreement. For female Ss, the ANOV yielded no significant differences. The correlation between discloser's and target's report was significant at  $p < .05$  for males ( $r = .36$ ), but not for females.

There were strong intercorrelations among the peer ratings themselves. For females, significant correlations at the .05 level occurred between all 21 combinations of variables except two. For males, there was indication of a clustering of presumably positive traits. However, when the peer ratings were considered in relation to scores on the Self-Disclosure Inventory, few significant relationships appear.

For the male Ss considered as a homogeneous group, the only significant relationship by ANOV was between self-report of self-disclosure and peer ratings on self-disclosure ( $p < .05$ ). This finding was supported by the sole significant correlation ( $p < .05$ ) of .30. When, however, the data for the three groups were analyzed separately as for three distinct replications, this relationship was not found significant in any of the groups (in fact, only two relationships appeared significant out of 21 tested,

and these were not replicated across houses). Using the friend's data as the measure of disclosure, no significant relationships with peer ratings appear for the total male group. The noted relationship between ratings of self-disclosure and inventory score for self-report was observed at a trend level ( $p < .10$ ) for friend report. In the individual houses, again two out of 21 relationships were significant for friend report; interestingly, these involved peer ratings on self-disclosure but reflected apparent curvilinear relationships in opposite directions.

For the total group of female Ss, there were two significant correlations ( $p < .05$ ): between peer ratings of self-disclosure and both self-report and friend report of disclosure. However, ANOV yielded no significant differences in ratings among high, medium, and low disclosers. Within the individual houses, only two out of 28 possible relationships were significant at the .05 level; given the large number of analyses and the failure to replicate, these findings may be interpreted as chance occurrence.

#### Discussion

The results of this study offer some evidence of the validity of the Self-Disclosure Inventory for males but not for females. In the agreement between self-report and the friend's report for males and in the relationship between self-report of disclosure and peer ratings on self-disclosure, there is the suggestion that the scale "works." The peer rating data, however, is not conclusive; the low, although positive, correlation with self-report and the failure to confirm a significant relationship with the inventory score for the data from the friends or for the self-reports within the individual houses weakens the argument for validation.

The lack of agreement between female Ss and their friends on how much had been disclosed is difficult to explain. It may be that they interpreted the task differently than did the males and than the E expected them to. Swensen (1968) cites findings that self-disclosure is negatively related to masculinity on the Guilford-Zimmerman, and Jourard (1964) suggests that in our culture it is unmanly to be open. It may then be that self-disclosure is a more distinctive variable for males than for females. There may be a narrower range in the actual behavior (though not in the scale scores) for females, and hence no clear relationships emerged.

There was here no support for the proposition of a relationship between self-disclosure and positive peer perceptions. There were indications for some validity to the peer ratings themselves. It was not demonstrated that each scale was measuring its respective trait, but the intercorrelations suggest that, at least, the ratings reflect a general tone in the perceptions of that person; presumably, given the labels, that tone would be positive. The failure to find a relationship between self-disclosure and peer perceptions raises some question as to the validity of the scale or of the proposition. For males, at least, it may be argued that the other findings do suggest some validity to the scale; the results may then be interpreted as indicating that the relationship between self-disclosure and others' perceptions is not a simple, direct one and that there are other variables to be considered for this population. Perhaps, for these college students, the "psychological health" that is theoretically linked to self-disclosure is not an important determinant in peer relationships.

Additional Note: The data from a different aspect of this study indicated:

1) Subjects who reported that they were high disclosers also reported that

their parents had disclosed highly to them ( $p < .01$  for both parents of male Ss;  $p < .10$  for mothers of female Ss), but 2) their parents did not agree. Parent return rate was 97% of the mothers and 88% of the fathers.

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